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United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific

Report of the Secretary-General

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I. Introduction

1. On 9 December 1997, the General Assembly adopted, without a vote, resolution 52/39 A, entitled "United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific". In paragraph 6 of that resolution, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to it at its fifty-third session on the implementation of the resolution.

2. The present report is submitted pursuant to that request.

II. Activities of the Centre from August 1997 to July 1998

3. The Secretary-General believes that the mandate of the Centre remains valid and that the Centre can play a useful role in fostering a climate of cooperation and disarmament in the region in the post-cold-war era. Indeed, consultations with Member States and academic institutes within and outside the region have confirmed the continuing support for the Centre's role in encouraging regional and subregional dialogue for the enhancement of openness, transparency and confidence-building and the promotion of disarmament and security. In this connection, the value of regional meetings organized by the Centre has been highly commended.

4. Within the limited financial resources available during the reporting period, the Centre was able to organize two major regional meetings at Jakarta and Kathmandu respectively. Both meetings were fully financed from voluntary contributions of Member States and interested organizations.

5. The first of the two meetings, the "United Nations Regional Disarmament Meeting in South-East Asia", organized in close cooperation with the Government of Indonesia, was held at Jakarta from 16 to 18 February 1998. It was the first such regional meeting held in South-East Asia and was attended by 46 participants from Governments, research institutes and non-governmental organizations. The objective of the meeting was to review current disarmament issues and to explore a common ground for possible joint efforts by the international community to address those issues. The plenary was devoted to addressing the topic of nuclear disarmament. Within this context, a discussion took place on the role of the Conference on Disarmament, bilateral nuclear arms reduction and the preparatory process for the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

6. Three working groups held in-depth discussions on specific topics. While two of them examined region-specific issues, such as nuclear-weapon-free zones, and regional cooperation and confidence-building measures, the third was engaged in the search for a common approach with respect to the convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. The proceedings of the meeting will be issued as the "Kathmandu process" series No. V at a later stage.

7. The regional peace and disarmament dialogue in the Asia-Pacific region, promoted by the Centre through the organization of annual meetings in the region and other means, has come to be known as the "Kathmandu process". The continuation of this process as a means of identifying pressing disarmament and security issues and exploring region-oriented solutions has gained the strong support of Member States and academic groups within the region. Strong support has also been expressed for the establishment of a close network, linking the Centre with its interlocutors within the region, as a way of exchanging data and information related to disarmament and security. The Secretary-General is gratified by the continued political and financial support for the "Kathmandu process" in the region.

8. It should be noted that, in recognition of the important role of the Regional Centre in promoting the "Kathmandu process", the Council for Security and Cooperation in the Asia Pacific Region, an organization of academic and research institutes in Asia and the Pacific, granted observer status to the Centre in September 1995. The Centre was the first observer ever admitted.

9. The second regional meeting was the tenth regional disarmament meeting in the Asia-Pacific region, held at Kathmandu from 22 to 24 February 1998. The meeting was held in commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the establishment of the Centre. Thirty-five participants from Governments, research institutes and non-governmental institutes within the region attended the meeting.

10. The meeting took stock of the achievements of the Centre in the past 10 years and, in particular, those of the "Kathmandu process" it had initiated. The meeting also examined the future role of the Centre and how it could further promote and utilize the regional and subregional security and disarmament dialogue provided through the "Kathmandu process". The proceedings of the meeting will be issued as the "Kathmandu process" series No. VI at a later stage.

11. In addition, the Centre provided organizational and substantive advice to the United Nations Association of Japan in its organization of the forth Kanazawa Symposium

on North-east Asia, held in Kanazawa, Japan, from 2 to 5 June 1998. The Symposium dealt with many issues directly relevant to this subregion, including the possible establishment of a regional organization for interregional cooperation, the Korean peninsula and interregional cooperation for environmental protection and bilateral economic relations. It also held a discussion on the United Nations in the twenty-first century. The Director of the Centre attended the Symposium.

12. The Centre published under the title *The Kathmandu Process* series III and IV, the proceedings of the 1997 Kathmandu regional disarmament meeting on nuclear disarmament in the post-comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty era and the 1997 Sapporo conference on a new agenda for disarmament and regional security.

13. Pursuant to the General Assembly's request, contained in its resolution 52/38 S, that the Secretary-General provide assistance to the Central Asian countries in the preparation of the form and elements of an agreement on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia, the Centre organized several informal gatherings for the Central Asian States to exchange views on how to promote their initiative in this regard. It also organized a United Nations-sponsored expert group meeting at Geneva on 24 April 1998 to discuss the basic structure and elements of a future agreement. On 9 and 10 July 1998, a "Consultative Meeting of Experts of the Central Asian States, the nuclear-weapon States, and the United Nations" was held in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. The meeting was organized and hosted by the Kyrgyz Republic and considered substantive aspects of a future agreement. It was also attended by the International Atomic Energy Agency. The Centre provided the meeting with organizational and substantive support.

14. As a means of promoting cooperation and mutual interaction between the Centre and the Council for Security and Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific Region, the Director of the Centre attended a meeting of the Council's Working Group on Confidence and Security Measures in Asia and the Pacific, convened in Washington, D.C., from 7 to 9 May 1998. The meeting held a wide-ranging discussion on the future of nuclear cooperation and the peaceful use of nuclear energy, in particular, the possibility of Asia-Pacific nuclear energy cooperation. Similarly, at the invitation of the Programme for Promotion of Nuclear Non-Proliferation, the Director attended a regional seminar on "South-east Asia: Regional Security and Nuclear Non-Proliferation" held at Bangkok from 18 to 21 November 1997.

III. Staffing and financing

15. In accordance with the Centre's mandate, all activities of the Centre should be financed from voluntary contributions of Member States and other interested organizations. Owing to persistent and serious financial constraints, it was impossible for the Centre to recruit any local support staff. For that reason, the Director continued to operate from United Nations Headquarters, an arrangement that will have to remain in force until reliable means can be found to finance the operational costs of the Centre at Kathmandu. In the meantime, the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Information Office at Kathmandu have continued to provide the Centre with logistical support for the meeting held there each year.

16. During the period August 1997 to July 1998, voluntary contributions in the amount of $202,500 were received. In addition, a number of Governments provided logistical and financial support by hosting conferences and absorbing a major portion of the costs. The Secretary-General wishes to express his gratitude to the Governments of India, Japan, Myanmar, Nepal, Norway, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea and Thailand, as well as to Rissho Kosei-Kai, a Japanese non-governmental organization, for their contributions, and to the Government of Nepal for its overall support of the Centre. Furthermore, the Secretary-General wishes to express his appreciation to the City of Sapporo and the Hokkaido Prefecture for the 1997 Sapporo Conference, and to the Government of Indonesia for the 1998 Regional Disarmament Meeting in South-east Asia. While appreciative of the substantive contributions received, the Secretary-General appeals to Member States to continue to make voluntary contributions to the Centre in order to ensure its viability and enhance its effective functioning.